

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method comprising:
  - 2 receiving a first signal from a local device;
  - 3 converting said first signal to a first network port packet data signal to
  - 4 emulate a local data signal port; and
  - 5 transmitting said first network port packet data signal to a first remote
  - 6 device over a network connection.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving said first signal comprises
  - 2 receiving a command signal to generate a local port pin data signal.
- 1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said receiving said first signal comprises
  - 2 receiving a local port pin data signal.
- 1 4. The method in claim 1 further comprising:
  - 2 receiving a second network port packet data signal from said first remote
  - 3 device over said network connection;
  - 4 converting said second network port packet data signal to a second signal
  - 5 to emulate said local data signal port; and
  - 6 transmitting said second signal to said local device.
- 1 5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

2 receiving a second network port packet data signal, said second network  
3 port packet data signal comprising a busy signal indicating that said first remote  
4 device is busy, and an address of a second remote device on said network  
5 connection, said second remote device being serviced by said first remote  
6 device;

7 transmitting a third network port packet data signal to said second remote  
8 device requesting status information of said first remote device; and

9 receiving a fourth network port packet data signal from said second  
10 remote device, said fourth packet signal comprising said status information of  
11 said first remote device.

1 6. The method of claim 4 further comprising:

2 receiving a third network port packet data signal from a second remote  
3 device while receiving said second network port packet data signal from said first  
4 remote device; and

5 sending a fourth network port packet data signal to said second remote  
6 device, said fourth network port packet data signal comprising a busy signal and  
7 an address of said first remote device on said network connection.

1 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 receiving a second network port packet data signal from said first remote  
3 device, said second network port packet data signal including status information  
4 of said first remote device; and

5 storing said second network port packet data signal including status  
6 information.

1 8. An apparatus comprising:  
2 an first port to receive a first signal from a local device;  
3 a first plurality of circuit components to convert said first signal to a first  
4 network port packet data signal to emulate a local data signal port; and  
5 a second port to transmit said first network port packet data signal to a first  
6 remote device over a network connection.

1 9. The apparatus of claim 8 further comprising:  
2 a third port to receive a second network port packet data signal from said  
3 first remote device over said network connection;  
4 a second plurality of circuit components to convert said second network  
5 port packet data signal to a second signal to emulate said local data signal port;  
6 and  
7 a fourth port to transmit said second signal to said local device.

1 10. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein:  
2 said second port further comprises a second port to receive a second  
3 network port packet data signal, said second network port packet data signal  
4 comprising a busy signal indicating that said first remote device is busy, and an

5 address of a second remote device on said network connection, said second  
6 remote device being serviced by said first remote device;  
7 said first plurality of circuit components further comprises a first plurality of  
8 circuit components to transmit a third network port packet data signal to said  
9 second remote device requesting status information of said first remote device;  
10 and  
11 said first port further comprises a first port to receive a fourth network port  
12 packet data signal from said second remote device, said fourth packet signal  
13 comprising said status information of said first remote device.

1 11. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:

2 said third port further comprises a third port to receive a third network port  
3 packet data signal from a second remote device while receiving the second  
4 network port packet data signal from said first remote device; and

5 said second plurality of circuit components further comprises a second  
6 plurality of circuit components to send a fourth network port packet signal to said  
7 second remote device, said fourth network port packet data signal comprising a  
8 busy signal and an address of said first remote device on said network  
9 connection.

1 12. A storage medium having stored therein a plurality of instructions that are  
2 machine executable, wherein when executed, the executing instructions operate  
3 to receive a first signal from a local device, convert said first signal to a first

4 network port packet data signal to emulate a local data signal port, and transmit  
5 said first network port packet data signal to a first remote device over a network  
6 connection.

1 13. The storage medium of claim 12, wherein said executing instructions  
2 further operate to receive a command signal to generate a local port pin data  
3 signal.

1 14. The storage medium of claim 12, wherein said executing instructions  
2 further operate to receive a local port pin data signal.

1 15. The storage medium of claim 12, wherein said executing instructions  
2 further operate to receive a second network port packet data signal from said first  
3 remote device over said network connection, convert said second network port  
4 packet data signal to a second local port pin data signal to emulate said local  
5 data signal port, and transmit said second local port pin data signal to said local  
6 device.

1 16. The storage medium of claim 12, wherein said executing instructions  
2 further operate to receive a second network port packet data signal, said second  
3 network port packet data signal comprising a busy signal indicating that said first  
4 remote device is busy, and an address of a second remote device on said  
5 network connection, said second remote device being serviced by said first

6 remote device, transmit a third network port packet data signal to said second  
7 remote device requesting status information of said first remote device, and  
8 receive a fourth network port packet data signal from said second remote device,  
9 said fourth packet signal comprising said status information of said first remote  
10 device.

1 17. The storage medium of claim 15, wherein said executing instructions  
2 further operate to receive a third network port packet data signal from a second  
3 remote device while receiving said second network port packet data signal from  
4 said first remote device, and send a fourth network port packet data signal to said  
5 second remote device, said fourth network port packet data signal comprising a  
6 busy signal and an address of said first remote device on said network  
7 connection.

1 18. The storage medium of claim 12, wherein said executing instructions  
2 further operate to receive a second network port packet data signal from said first  
3 remote device, said second network port packet data signal including status  
4 information of said first remote device, and store said second network port packet  
5 data signal including status information.